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## Sustainable Practices Lab at Washington State Penitentiary

### Overview:

[Washington State Penitentiary](#) offenders are appreciative to use their time for projects to aid not only those in our community, but around the world.

The program currently supports refurbishing of children's bicycles for under privileged children, dresses to women and children in South America, refurbishing of wheelchairs, along with quilts and blankets to benefit charities or for the need in local shelters.



The program is self-sustaining and is operated based on donations of materials, equipment and resources. The offenders have done well, working with the limited resources that have. We are currently working with the community to help gain support for this program, as well as being supportive of the needs in the community.

### Programs:

- **Roots of Success:** Utilizing offender instructors, students go through a 10 week sustainability education course. Partial classroom course & partial hands on learning, these students will participate in various sustainable-related jobs as a type of internship.
- **The Redemption Project:** This program helps gets offenders involved in being proactive in reducing violence, negativity and other counterproductive behaviors in the prison's environment. This is accomplished through a 'Self Awareness' class which deals with getting to know themselves on a deeper level, how to strengthen family ties from prison, coping with incarceration, and educating them to focus on life beyond prison.
- **Sustainability Seminars:** Subject matter experts from area colleges and other organizations hold monthly seminars to educate interested offenders on various environmental topics. Previous topics have included "Invasive Plant Species" and "The Life of Owls," with future seminars planned.

- **Wood Re-Use Program:** Utilizing wood & other materials recycled from pallets and other disposed scrap, our wood shop is able to create a wide range of items from birdhouses to adirondack chairs. These items are donated to local charities to be sold, auctioned, or raffled off to help support their programs.

- **Fabric Re-Use Program:** With more than 20 offenders working at any given time, utilizing donated equipment and materials, this program makes artistic & beautiful quilts along with handbags for the local women's shelter, teddy bears, wall hangings, holiday stockings, pillow case dresses, sleeping bags, pot holders and 'skull caps' for children with cancer.



- **Vermiculture:** Once thought of as just a friend to farmers and fishermen, earthworms have been enlisted in the fight to make our world a greener, cleaner place. Starting with just 25,000 "red wiggler" earthworms, the population has grown into more than 2 million worms. These worms consume over 1000 pounds of food waste every week, saving the institution thousands of dollars in disposal costs, and creating top quality compost and fertilizer products.
- **Horticulture:** The Horticulture program takes soil, donated seeds and equipment and combines them with willing hands to create educational and vocational programs introducing inmates to sustainability. The offenders will also begin the 'starts' for various flower beds around the institution.
- **Sign Shop:** Everything from cut-vinyl signs to hand-painted signs, with the only cost being the materials to maintain operation of the program. The Sign shop provides signage for the institution. Further benefit comes by teaching vocational skills to offenders
- **Bicycle Refurbish Program:** Through our partnerships with local law enforcement, colleges, and charities, bicycles are collected & repaired by offenders. The repaired bicycles are then donated to area charities, given to needy children or auctioned off to support the charity.
- **Furniture Repair:** As chairs, tables, desks, & other office furniture fell into disrepair they were discarded and replaced. We now take these items into the Lab for repair and reuse within the agency.
- **Native American Regalia:** For many Native American inmates who have had little exposure to the traditional beliefs of their tribe, prison has enabled them to connect to their culture. Traditional paintings, ceremonial drums, and other pieces of Native art are created by participating offender volunteers using donated materials and supported by Tribal authorities.

## More Information

Visit the Department of Corrections' [sustainability website](#) for statewide information.